

Fiction as the 'River Between': *Daniel Martin*

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*Daniel Martin*¹ is not only John Fowles's longest novel, but it is also a work of fiction which challenges the most feared rival of contemporary fiction both at the level of its plot and by way of 'bringing home' its technical solutions.

The most feared rival of contemporary fiction is of course twentieth century film, more specifically its Hollywood versions. We assert that the process of 'bringing home' technical solutions, which earlier belonged to the realist novel but by now are predominantly employed by the art of film, is an essential aspect of the novel.

This process is extremely complex and it is virtually impossible to describe it, so we would like to use two quotations taken from John Fowles's non-fiction to suggest the 'atmosphere' it is supposed to create and support.

John Fowles explains the artist's desire to be at home in a kind of myth which is at the same time extremely private and also universal, where childhood and adulthood are one but are still identifiable, where dreams and reality are and are not interchangeable.

Beyond the specific myth of each novel, the novelist longs to be possessed by the continuous underlying myth he entertains of himself—a state not to be obtained by method, logic, self-analysis, intelligent judgement, or another of the qualities that make a good teacher, executive or scientist. I should find it very hard to define what constitutes this being possessed, yet I know when I am and when I am not; know too, that there are markedly different degrees of the state; that it functions as much by exclusion as by awareness; and above all, that it remains childlike in its fertility of lateral inconsequence, its setting of adultly ordered ideas in flux. Indeed, the workbench cost of this possession is revision—the elimi-

¹ Fowles, John. 1986. *Daniel Martin*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

nation of the childish from the childlike, both in the language and in the conception.²

In the following short quotation John Fowles warns against ‘archetypal fear’ that illusions reflected in images which are perceivable through the senses become static and destroy the mobility characteristic of creative perception.

Novelists have an almost archetypal fear that illustration will overstamp text, or more precisely that their readers’ imaginations (which play a vitally creative part in the total experience of a book) will be pinned down and manacled by a set of specific images. This began long before the cinema, of course.³

Robert Huffaker states that in John Fowles’s concept the artist might occasionally conquer time and thus achieve a status, which is superior to its rival arts. When writing about *Daniel Martin* he reaches relevant conclusions, which serve as starting points for our expertise in the present essay.

The all-wise Herr Professor whom Dan and Jane meet cruising the Nile tells of feeling, as he concentrated upon an artefact, that he became “the river between”—that he somehow sensed *the artist’s living presence, beyond time, of the ghosts of his past.*⁴

Robert Huffaker also states that for Fowles, man’s triumph over time and “the tyranny of the stupid” is his native freedom—particularly the freedom to express the depth and breadth of his own feelings. Robert Huffaker also writes that freedom came to be expressed in a number of ways which otherwise could be interpreted as examples of enslavement or tyranny.

² Fowles, John. 1977. “Hardy and the Hag.” In *Wormholes*, 140–41. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999.

³ Fowles, John. 1981. “The Filming of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*.” In *Wormholes*, 34–42. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, 40.

⁴ Huffaker, Robert. 1980. *John Fowles*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 42.

Obsessed by magnitude and quantity, pharaohs had forced their people's sensibilities into a monstrosity-as-art, but human feelings have survived despite megalomania. (For John Fowles writing a novel becomes the expression of freedom) "especially the freedom to know oneself" which has always been the driving-force of human evolution.⁵

Daniel Martin is a novel, which discusses the freedom to know oneself, the possibility of return to the childlike innocence of its character and of the above-mentioned mode of 'illustration,' and return to its traditional status. John Fowles tries to incorporate into his novel technical solutions perfected by contemporary film to demonstrate their limited possibilities in terms of artistic creativity and as opposed to the flexibility of various fictional solutions available for the contemporary novelist.

The task undertaken by John Fowles in the novel we are discussing is an extremely difficult one as his intention to apply the technical solutions of film industry to fiction writing is problematic and of course it has provoked serious criticism regarding the style, technique and structure of *Daniel Martin*. Similar attempts of John Fowles to juxtapose seemingly incompatible art techniques, periods of history, different forms of art supported the artist's fiction in virtually all his earlier books.

The plot, style, technique of *Daniel Martin* lead to conclusions which support our thesis regarding John Fowles's faith in the possibilities of contemporary fiction to sort out and artistically formulate aspects of life, art and freedom which are not available to other arts. As the novel is extremely difficult to read and equally difficult to interpret, we are going to select some relatively accessible aspects for our discussion of the themes of art, life and freedom in *Daniel Martin*.

At the level of the plot of the novel the direction suggested by John Fowles is easy to interpret. The protagonist of the novel is an extremely talented middle-aged Englishman, who is a successful writer of film scripts who at the time of the novel's present lives in Hollywood and enjoys financial wealth, the company of beautiful women and even his work.

Yet, his conversation with the young Scottish actress reveals frustration as the intention formulated both by the young actress and the writer of film scripts is formulated as the necessity of going home. The possi-

⁵ Huffaker 1980, 44.

bility or impossibility of getting home will become one of the central theoretical concerns of the novel as well.

The question is whether Daniel Martin can 'get home' to his country and regain his right to dream about love, friendship, countryside and an adequate form of art which can formulate his yearning for a form of life which is freed of the tyranny of money and success.

The form of art he dreamed of as a young man was drama. The availability of this form of literature to fiction was convincingly demonstrated earlier in *The Magus* where the 'art world' efficiently supported the idea that fiction is an extremely flexible form of literature, which can absorb a number of possible artistic formulae, offered up by other arts. Daniel Martin will express his intentions to write a novel entitled *Daniel Martin*, which is the novel we are about to finish when the intention is formulated

As we have already mentioned reading the novel we find out that Daniel Martin the scriptwriter working for Hollywood productions discovers that financial wealth, fame and success with women cannot compensate for the loss of his dreams to write drama. Consequently he starts writing a novel which is, actually, John Fowles's novel, entitled *Daniel Martin*.

The first section of the novel is a mixture of film and fiction and its effect is negative in the extreme. This negative aesthetics is created through the dialogic sections of the novel, which are dense with technical solutions characteristic of film-scripts. They are intended to suggest at the level of discourse and style the alien character of the world chosen earlier by the title character.

Stage directions and technical directions interrupt the fictional material and they very often disturb, technically deconstruct the tone, if not the flow of the main narrative. For example, the dialogue between the title character and his mistress ends with a short cut and thus aggressively contradicts our expectations and of course the authorial intention is to 'stain the water clear.'⁶

The above irregularities stress one of the themes behind the novel, namely the author's meditation on the difference between film and novel and the status of the artists who together contribute to the creation of a film and the solitary novelist.

⁶ Reference goes to William Balke's formula employed in "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*.

Stage or rather script directions call attention to the alien domain from which Daniel Martin has to escape if he wants to regain the old fashioned freedom and privacy of fiction writing. John Fowles' expertise seems to be aimed at detecting those elements, which can be shared by the two arts and the process by way of which he can render the incompatible elements of film fictionally accessible.

John Fowles discussed the difference between film and fiction on several occasions. He denounced the distortion of normal, new-humanist value system of the Hollywood 'image-making' industry in "Gather Ye Starlets."⁷

In other non-fictional works John Fowles's interpretation of the loneliness of the novelist in comparison with the 'team-work' existence of scriptwriters, directors, cameramen and actors suggests the author's pride in the difficult task of the novelist and the freedom of any writer of fiction which is a function of his individual talent.⁸

John Fowles's attitude towards film industry stems from his respect for a form of art, which gathers great talents, but he is careful to formulate his esteem for the film in the context of knowledge that film is a rival art for traditional fiction. As traditional, representational, or realistic fiction is extremely important for John Fowles, when his novels, short stories and non-fiction are concerned with the relationship between film and fiction awareness of the above rivalry is emphatically formulated.

When John Fowles casts his title character in the position of the prodigal son, whose return to the world he earlier betrayed and abandoned becomes a central concern at all the dimensions of the book, he creates the fictional frame for the discussion of the relationship of the two contemporary rival arts as well.

Yet, *Daniel Martin* should not be interpreted in (auto)biographical terms, because its larger context establishes the theoretical interpretation of contemporary fiction's possibilities as a first principle, and thus it becomes consistent with most of John Fowles's work, in that it fictionalises the theoretical aspects which regard the state of fiction.

As we have already suggested, in this sense the novel follows the authorial intention stated by his earlier novels. *The Collector* discusses the

⁷ Fowles, John. 1965. "Gather Ye Starlets." In *Wormholes*, 89–99. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999.

⁸ Fowles, John. 1981. "The Filming of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*." In *Wormholes*, 34–42. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999.

possibility of fictionalising the dual narrative in essentially realistic mode and yet avoids similarity with the inarticulate material created by some fifties and sixties fiction. Aspects of life and art relationship are relevant, impenetrable mysteries for the collector who is a monster created by the process of dehumanisation which dominates the fifties.

The Magus demonstrates that the death of the novel, formulated by one of the main characters of the novel is a false fictional possibility. Maurice Conchis's insistence on artistic possibilities other than fictional are articulated within the frames of traditional narrative. In that novel the result is that that fiction benefits from the contribution of the technical and artistic possibilities offered up by the 'masks,' or the relevant literary and artistic echoes employed to justify and articulate the 'lessons' formulated by the dramatic episodes.

Mechanical 'art' is condemned in *The Collector*, where it is mainly associated with killing, and perverse dehumanisation. Maurice Conchis promises June and Julie roles in a film which is never completed, and the films that are actually produced in that novel produced are porno material.

Daniel Martin starts from the description of the harvest scene, which turns horrible through its imagery. The chapter forces the reader to accept that he or she is ignorant about the nature of the memories, which were revealed by the author. The text of the chapter becomes difficult to interpret and authorial support is refused to the reader. "Did 'ee see 'un, m'? Did 'ee see 'un, Miz Martin? Us-all coulda touched'un, couldnen us, Danny?" could be the more intelligible variant of James Joyce's song introducing Stephen Dedalus's story, but as the image of the bombers and of the animals being massacred predicted the 'pastoral' dimension lost its meaning as idyllic or peaceful.

The presentation of the scene is impersonal to the extent that it could be charged as cruel. We jump in time through a short 'Later.' The scene, which openly recalls Hardy, ends, when the young protagonist says goodbye to his boyhood.

Adieu, my boyhood and my dream.

Close shot.

D.H.M.

And underneath: 21 Aug 42. (*D. M.* 16)

This is then the dimension to which the novel's title character has to return in order to achieve the 'whole sight,' without which all is desolation as the first line of the novel announces. Yet we know that the past which has to be revisited showed him as "Inscrutable innocent, already in exile." (*D. M.* 16) The question is whether return to an earlier phase of exile is worth the price. Of course we do not know yet what the price is.

The chapter entitled "Games" introduces us to a more comfortable form of exile. Daniel Martin manages to write materials, which actually bring him success in a totally alien world; the dream factory of media dominated contemporary society.

As it happened in John Fowles's earlier novels the mobility of the setting is relevant. Daniel Martin, the child whom we met in the first chapter was born and brought up in England, but in the novel's present he lives in Hollywood. The first chapter is not his memory of the past but an impersonal, 'shooting' a technical solution, which is meaningless even in the context of the first two chapters.

The paradise, or dream world of many artists was generous to the prodigal son, who nevertheless has to travel back to England to discover his need for 'naturalness' and later his right to be happy and rooted in a tradition which he came to forget. The journey is rather relevant in its spiritual sense, and this is explicit in the novel as Daniel Martin can only arrive 'home' if he visits a land of more complex spiritual significance than England or America.

Egypt brings about the theme of Isis and Osiris, with the possible interpretation of the spirit of Dorset assimilating its 'brother' formerly blinded and misled by financial success and giving birth to it. What disturbs the reader of *Daniel Martin* is its 'material' pretence, that is that in most part John Fowles is trying to pass a theoretically discussed series of film-script-like chapters as a coherent, traditional novel.

Actually, the above mentioned pretence supports the 'existential' and spiritual situation of the protagonist. Daniel Martin misinterpreted the concept of freedom similarly to Nicholas Urfe in *The Magus*. Nicholas Urfe interpreted freedom as the result of being unattached. Daniel Martin interpreted freedom as a series of fragments of indispensable infidelities. These infidelities are interpreted as fragments because they were committed by Daniel Martin as reactions to certain conflicting situations viewed in isolation which the protagonist is trying to interpret

in the larger context of his enslavement by a definitely alien form of life and art only when he is forced to meditate on his possibilities of 'getting home.' We have already demonstrated the nature of the technique, which creates the sense of isolation, which rules the novel's first two chapters.

Daniel Martin is culpable for a series of infidelities, which in their turn determine his perception of spiritual and material reality and the narrative strategy employed by John Fowles attempts to reproduce the novel's dissociation from traditional interpretation, which his title-character importantly comes to understand step by step.

The successful scriptwriter only realises after many years of pseudo-security provided by financial wealth that he has to pay for his disloyalty, his betrayal of what he at the moment of the writing of the novel comes to understand as art. Art is different from the 'creative writing' he has excelled in as a famous scriptwriter and his gradual 'reforgetting'⁹ of earlier dreams of art brings about his 'reforgetting' of earlier dreams of life as well.

Consequently the novel reveals other aspects of betrayal as he discovers that the lovely mistress with whom he has a love affair, or rather a flirt fades away besides the memory of the woman he loved and deserted. This realisation helps him understand one source of his exile.

Art and love have become for him constituent elements of an overall false attitude towards life and implicitly are telling of his paradoxical betrayal of ideals, which are indispensable for his integrity. This means that Daniel Martin is faced with his image as an artificial 'version' of what he could have become if he had chosen the right form of art and life.

He has to learn that if he wants to interpret his existence in humanistic terms, he has to give up his right to direct, order and manipulate people from the position of authority provided for him by his status as a script writer of international fame. Because he has the courage 'to get home' our idea of him will be interpretable by paraphrasing John Fowles.

I don't think of myself as 'giving up work to be a writer,'
I'm giving up work to, at last, be.¹⁰

⁹ *Reforgetting* is a term employed by John Fowles's artist character in *Mantissa*.

¹⁰ Fowles, John. 1964. "I Write Therefore I Am." In *Wormholes*, 5-12. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, 7.

Similarly Daniel Martin has to understand that he sacrificed traditionally human institutions like marriage, friendship and professional dedication on the altar of false judgements, which nevertheless are valid, accepted and powerful in the world of success. Yet, the title hero senses that money, success and international reputation as established authority in the film industry do not allow for dimensions which are natural in the world of a novelist who is dedicated to fiction the 'Cinderella' in the world mass-produced art.

When he calls the novel a 'Cinderella' form of art John Fowles explains that for most novelists to have their fiction filmed is the equivalent of having a luxury hard cover edition published. Yet, we should remember that he hastens to add that novel writing can offer a privacy, and fidelity to the 'muse' or inspiration which film industry can never achieve.¹¹

The novel is not so pessimistic as some critics understood it to be, what is more, we could say that it is, so far, the first from among John Fowles's novels, which has a happy ending. As we have already stated the frustration of the reader stems from the intentionally 'mistaken' choice of technique, the discomfort brought about by the wrong means employed for the wrong art an aspect that is explicit in the narrative technique of the novel. The tyranny of success and money is also given comprehensive presentation and its seemingly unquestionable dominance comes to be reduced as the protagonist manages to identify his 'roots' and 'reactivate' them.

In *Daniel Martin* mass-dehumanisation is more comprehensively handled than in *The Collector* and the process is envisaged as reversible. The title hero of the novel can take the road he earlier abandoned for money, success or what seemed to be a more rewarding form of existence as the novel Daniel Martin is writing manages to disclose its roots, and this process is not delayed by the author. When John Fowles admits his association with the art of Thomas Hardy in the first chapter of *Daniel Martin* he makes it clear that return to tradition is possible mainly owing to the life force contained by that tradition.

¹¹ Fowles, John. 1988. "A Modern Writer's France." In *Wormholes*, 43-55. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, 43.

Thomas Hardy's influence¹² also suggests that the world to which Daniel Martin wants to return is loaded with ideological, moral, ethical and artistic dilemmas. We also should remember that return would not bring about happiness as a static condition but rather as a series of 'short lived joy' which compensates for participation in the continuous drama of 'being at home.'

The protagonist of the novel has to find remedy for virtually all the wrongs that he caused through his ignorance of his own status as artist and a human being. Daniel Martin gave up genuine love out of misjudged honesty towards his friend with the result that his friendship with Anthony became the victim of false social and moral norms and expectations.

The existential elements at stake are 'solved' in the course of the plot and they are supported by the possibility created by another major theme of the novel, which is the relationship between art and life. Life, that is events formulated by the plot, Anthony's approaching death and the relative impossibility of refusing a dyeing friend's last wish creates the fictional pretext or possibility for Daniel Martin to revisit the physical dimension which hosted the promise of a fuller, more human variant of life in his youth.

If we interpret the novel as a set of isolated 'scenes' where the 'artificial' distance is preserved by the infidelities of the title character we may say that Anthony's death could be compared to the removal of one brick from the wall which separates the falsehood of 'adulthood' and the 'innocence in exile' of childhood. Because the 'wall' which separates these dimensions is of Dan's construction it does not 'collapse' and the process brings about an easily interpretable stream of memories.

The proximity of a myth influences the course of the protagonist's spiritual 'career,' as in most of the novels of John Fowles. Art 'regained,' in its turn allows for the reformulation of human relationships and marks the end of Daniel Martin's hollow existence. The principle of chronologically identifiable and describable journey, which actually is the material equivalent of a character's spiritual journey, is relevant and consistent with John Fowles's art so we have to pay attention to his handling of this dimension in the novel as well.

¹² Cassagrande, Peter J. 1987. *Hardy's Influence on the Modern Novel*. London: Macmillan Press.

In *Daniel Martin* John Fowles's handling of chronology or rather the time dimension is also designed to support the success of the other narrative elements at work. *Daniel Martin* opens at two widely separate times and settings which actually determine the protagonist's fate, because they can be identified as standing for his relationship towards two opposite interpretations of life and art.

As we have already mentioned we meet Daniel who is fifteen years old in Devon in August 1942. Two incidents deconstruct the idyllic possibilities of harvest and the rural setting. It is also important that Daniel Martin is the son of a rural clergyman whose first memories envisaged in the novel are related to horror, rather than idyllic peace and calm.

The young boy watches in horror the slaughter of the rabbits by the harvesters and air raids and bombing disturb the harvest. War and bombing are relevant elements of memory, but as there are no victims, it is the sense of panic, which it causes, that becomes a relevant element that can contribute to the general atmosphere of the novel. The events have to be defined as the novel's past, although, as we have stated earlier, awareness of the protagonist's past has to be regained.

The present tense of the novel introduces the other face of Daniel Martin. He is a middle-aged film writer of international reputation. Prosperous, envied by many he lives in his luxury apartment building in Hollywood, California. A successful middle-aged man should be attractive for women and the stereotype is complete as when we meet him Daniel Martin is speaking with his mistress, Jenny O'Neill. This beautiful woman is a promising young Scottish actress, of course, but as we learn about their conversation the accepted stereotypes do not match perfectly, as the two are speaking about the necessity of 'going home' and going home is not only interpretable literally. Returning home and being at home do not complement an atmosphere of certainty and balanced existence but suggest a sense of split identity.

'It was on the old Camelot set. It suddenly hit me. How well I matched it. The betrayal of myths. As if I was totally in exile from what I ought to have been.' He added, Done.'

'And what is that?'

'Good question.'

'Try.'

‘Something to do with the artifice of the medium.’

(*D. M.*, 20)

The novel itself is telling of split identity because it is written in the form of a film script and it is absorbed by the permanent sense of division in the novel as it illustrates Daniel Martin's return from California to Devon. For the successful film-writer of international reputation return to Devon means that he is to abandon all that only Hollywood can offer in terms of money. Here again the situation suggests that human relationships, forgotten ideals can only be regained if he is able and ready to resume his place in a long forgotten ambition to become a writer of drama, or rather fiction. This process of ‘reforgetting’ can help him regain freedom over creating his own fictional future.

Mistaken decisions determine the directions taken by the book we are reading. Daniel Martin has betrayed Nell before their marriage with her sister Jane and during their marriage he betrayed her with a series of other women. Daniel Martin betrayed his friend and his ideal of friendship, when he had an affair with Jane of which Anthony knew and later as he had written and staged a spiteful play in which he puts the blame on Anthony, Jane and Nell. Daniel Martin betrayed his father who was an Anglican clergyman and his creed, because he becomes an atheist. He betrayed his artistic inclinations, his creative urge when he abandoned his dream to write a drama for the profits and fame of commercial film writing. No wonder he is telling Jenny that getting home is impossible.

‘If you run away, Jenny, you can't find your way back. That's all I meant. Trying to ... it's only a pipe-dream. Trying to crawl back inside the womb. Turn the clock back.’ He turns and smiles across at her. ‘Late night mauldering.’

‘You're so defeatist. All you have to do is put down exactly what you've just said.’

‘That's the last chapter. What I've become.’ (*D. M.* 22)

Dan has given up home, Devon, his roots convinced that it belongs to a dimension of his existence that will never reveal itself, once success, new life, career women give a new sense to his life. Anthony's approaching death becomes a kind of call for a new life for Daniel Martin, an undreamed of opportunity to achieve something he himself never really was able to articulate. He is offered the chance that one of his infi-

delities could be pardoned. The call from England is the call of a long forgotten past dream, a dream he could not even articulate as the two women are calling at Anthony's request, to ask Dan to visit his former friend, who is dying of cancer.

Daniel Martin reacts favourably to his former friend's request and when he flies to England he reveals that his ignorance of his former infidelity was a pretence as the fact that he 'repents' and goes to Oxford to meet with Anthony, now an Oxford philosopher, demonstrates that he knows that he must face the 'heart of darkness' of his own creation and this revelation enables him to use the chances to recover his lost past.

The novel creates a sense of a new beginning, of rebirth as Daniel Martin visits Anthony and the two confess their infidelities to each other. Daniel Martin is faced with his own earlier dreams is able to articulate his ambitions and understands that art and life are more important than his 'official' status.

'Long-distance. From home. They transferred the call.'
 'Who is it?'
 'The operator didn't say.' [...]
 'I shouldn't get excited. A hundred to one it's just some moronic Fleet-Street tattle-monger short of a paragraph.'
 'Or my Highland great-grandmother.' [...]
 In his ear, distances.
 The voice; and unbelievably, as in a fiction, the door in the wall opens. (*D. M.* 24)

Daniel Martin discovers that he is not flying to New York and home but into an 'empty space.' Anthony dies but not before making Dan promise to help Jane regain her status as a free woman. Anthony's argument actually charts Daniel Martin's journey back home.

'What she needs is someone who both knows her and doesn't. Who can remember what she once was? She's become very withdrawn, Dan. [...] One reason I can't talk with her about all these matters is that our marriage has become the standing proof that my case has no validity. I preach in an empty church, which proves my sermons are worthless.'
 (*D. M.* 203)

Dan is left no time to change his mind after agreeing, for Anthony commits suicide moments after Dan leaves the hospital. In large part

Dan will compensate for the lost time and possibilities as his relationship with Jane assumes the optimistic tone of the happiness he could not sense some twenty years earlier.

This more 'optimistic' ending is accompanied by the change of the narrative technique of the novel. In the moment Daniel Martin manages to abandon interpreting his life as if it were a film and return to a more comprehensive tradition which is fiction he becomes able to restore some of the essential dimensions of one's perception of reality, of the existential.

Katherine Tarbox explains John Fowles's attitude and the nature of the above narrative strategy.

Fowles believes that linear time is an artificial measuring device imposed upon experience, the real time is nebulous and that all time lies parallel.¹³

Dan returns with Jane to Thorncombe and they feel that they get home to precious experiences of their youth. He does it also by rejecting film-writing and committing himself to writing, with Jane's encouragement, an autobiographical novel whose hero is named Simon Wolfe.

As Katherine Tarbox notes Daniel Martin has to escape the tyranny of the cinema.

Dan's art lapses into present-tense narration mimic, the present tense tyranny of the camera.¹⁴

He manages to escape this tyranny and the novel reproduces the tonal recovery of the characters at the level of its texture.

One of the most curious features of this novel is that it changes abruptly two thirds of the way through. It changes, of course at the section that deals with Dan and Jane going up the Nile. The crazy-quilt structure gives way to a very traditional, linear, sequential narration.¹⁵

We may say that *Daniel Martin* is a novel, which is quite difficult to read because it contains technical solutions and methods, which belong to another sort of art, which is film. John Fowles has repeatedly men-

¹³ Tarbox, Katherine. 1988. *The Art of John Fowles*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 7.

¹⁴ Tarbox 1988, 89.

¹⁵ Tarbox 1988, 100.

tioned his concern regarding the inadequate means by which the realist novel is trying to do something that other arts are better equipped to achieve. The artist was absolutely right when he continued by attesting that the novel will continue in this way because readers are not prepared to accept a radically different solution to these problems.

Daniel Martin is an excellent illustration of what happens if the very nature of the two arts, that is the cinema and the fictional one are applied mechanically on either of them. It is important to remember that Daniel Martin considers the novel to stand above other forms of representation.

He manages to give up scriptwriting by the end of the novel in an attempt to 'get home,' that is to find his peace and harmony, or at least what is left of it. The novel employs the means of cinematic representation, such as flashbacks, intercutting, close-ups, which are actually inadequate as means of fictional representation in order to create the sense of displacement characteristic of the novel.

The structure of the novel is rendered similarly chaotic by a constant change of narrators, tenses, points of view. Yet it is possible to detect behind the parade of alien technical solutions which seem to govern the problematical structure of the novel the development of Daniel Martin's life-story from his teenage period to adulthood.

Daniel is a lonely character in the opening chapter of the novel and his alienation from the people slaughtering the rabbits and scared to death by the German bombers is clear from the very beginning of his life story. We are tempted to say that middle aged Daniel Martin is trying to tell us his interpretation of what he really was and is with the intention to find out what he can be, but this very smooth formula is contradicted by the organising principle at work.

We have already mentioned that Daniel Martin understands the artificial quality of his 'existence' and he compares it to the artificiality of the only medium he seems to be 'at home' in, which is film. Because he employs the technique of film, the different perspectives remain isolated, and they cannot cohere a narrative deficiency which is employed to express the kind of 'technical exile' as opposed to the '(human) spiritual exile' experienced by the protagonist.

The novel thus 'cuts' the roots of art, which feed on life and the most visible dimension of 'rootlessness' is linked to traditional elements of fiction like setting, time and narrative point of view. If we take, for example, time it is quite easy to demonstrate that life and art are in

search of conventional definition of time which includes past, present and future. Three-dimensional time is regained through journeys dense with private and collective myths, from among which the one regarding Isis and Osiris seems to be extremely important.

They were taken into a room to see a delicately incised wall-carving of the ritual pouring of the flood waters of the Nile, and he and she stayed on to see it better [...] Two divinities, a male and a female, faced each other, holding up tilted flasks from which the water poured in two curved and crossing lines, forming an arch; except that it wasn't water, but chains of the ancient keys-of-life, cascades of little loop-topped crosses. (*D. M.* 533)

Whether story, fictional reworking, 'homecoming' can be interpreted or not remains unstated at the end of the novel.

Dan's novel can never be read, lies eternally in the future, his ill-concealed ghost has made it impossible last his own impossible first. (*D. M.* 668)

Since *Daniel Martin* does not follow a traditional presentation of events, does not have chronological order a great deal of ordering is required. The novel contests and subverts the linear or diachronic development of events and challenges the straightforward way of reading.

The economy of traditional fictional methods fits better the fragmented accounts, the chaos of which Daniel is trying to make sense, but he has to work hard to regain access to smooth interpretation. Daniel starts to write a novel about his own life and the book 'suffers' the disadvantages of fiction constructed upon elements of film-script but in the end it leads to the union of the two arts in fiction.

As we have already stated the 'chaos' is supported through John Fowles's handling of the dimension of time. Timelessness replaces temporality and it dismisses unity, classification, or conventional order of narrative. This kind of interpretation of time is not really problematical in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, because one finds conventional elements that render the different experiments comprehensive for the reader. Of course, the flow of water which is not water, of time which is not time, the "chains of the ancient keys-of-life," the 'cascades' of different time dimensions, settings, meanings and technical solutions contrib-

ute to the unnatural character of the book which can be explained as the representation of the artist, life and art seen as "character(s) who must be seen in flight, like a bird that has forgotten how to stop migrating." (*D. M.* 295)

This 'migration' from one art to another, from one dimension in time to another, from artificial to natural life is supported by Daniel Martin's anxiety which stems from his understanding that the old is dying and the new cannot be born, reminiscent of John Fowles's theory regarding the situation of the novel in the twentieth century, when he states that if the novel is to survive it has to narrow its field to what other systems of recording cannot record.

I say 'one day' because the reading public still isn't very aware of what I call mischanelling [...].¹⁶

This individual and artistic anxiety is explained at the level of social and moral development as well at the beginning of the novel when he states that his contemporaries were brought up in the spirit of the nineteenth century because the twentieth century only started after 1945.

The statement is interesting with regards to the development of fiction, the genre Daniel Martin is trying to return to because the disputes about insistence on the material world as opposed to the representation of the artist's and its protagonists' interior world started much earlier. The criticism is then addressed to those who let themselves, their perception and presentation be reduced to the material world, its artifice in search of "something discontinuous and disconnected from present being." (*D. M.* 95)

Of course, Daniel Martin's personal failure is described in terms of the more private dimension of man woman relationship when he shows himself as someone who wants to define his identity by using the surface-reflection of him formulated by women.

He was arguably not even looking for women in all this, but collecting mirrors still; surfaces before which he could make himself naked—or at any rate more naked than he could before other men—and see himself reflected. A psychoanalyst might say he was something for the lost two-in-one identity

¹⁶ Fowles, John. 1964. "I Write Therefore I Am." In *Wormholes*, 5–12. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, 7.

of his first months of life; some solution for his double separation trauma, the universal one of infancy and the private experience of literally losing his mother. (*D. M.* 255-56)

Daniel Martin understands that the traditional definition of harmony, unity, order traps people into self-discipline, and restraint and this is ultimately the strategy that made of him a kind of authority in a world which is as artificial as the Victorian world dominated by the image of God. Daniel Martin discovers that homecoming in both terms of art and life is to know the difference between conventions and individual freedom, financial prosperity and spiritual redemption.

She was also some kind of emblem of a redemption from life devoted to heterogamy and adultery, the modern errant ploughman's final reward; and Dan saw ... for the first time in his life, the true difference between Eros and Agape. (*D. M.* 596) [Or Eros and civilisation, we might add.]

As we have already stated most notably, the novel explains the importance of absorbing the possibilities offered by contemporary rival arts. Daniel Martin understands that "dialogue is the only tool of the scriptwriter, but it is only a part of the novelist's art."¹⁷

The novel's insistence on two narrative points is abandoned in the last part and thus the 'I' and the 'he' is telling about the union of showing and telling and of the rebirth of past in present, much in the fashion described by Fowles.

I have heard writers claim that this first-person technique is a last bastion of the novel against the cinema, a form where the camera dictates an inevitable third-person point of view of what happens, however much we may identify with one character. But the matter of whether a contemporary novelist uses 'he' or 'I' is largely irrelevant. The great majority of modern third person narration is 'I' narration very thinly disguised. The real 'I' of the Victorian writers—the writer himself or herself—is as rigorously repressed there [...] as it

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

is, for obvious semantic and grammatical reasons, when the narration is in literal first-person.¹⁸

John Fowles's "I Write Therefore I Am" seems to offer relevant help when trying to formulate conclusions to our discussion of *Daniel Martin*.

Why have I got it in for the novel? Because it has been shifted away from life, whatever, as Wittgenstein put it, is the case, these last fifty years. Circumstances have imposed this shift. It is not the novelists' fault. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the novel was at one remove from life. But since the advent of film and television and sound recording it is at two removes. The novel is now generally about things and events, which other forms of art describe rather better. [...] All of us under forty write cinematically; our imaginations, constantly fed on films, 'shoot' scenes, and write descriptions of what has been shot. So for us a lot of novel writing is, or seems like, the tedious translating of an unmade and never-to-be-made film into words.¹⁹

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¹⁸ Fowles, John. 1969. "Notes on an Unfinished Novel." In *Wormholes*, 13–26. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, 18.

¹⁹ Fowles, John. 1964. "I Write Therefore I Am." In *Wormholes*, 5–12. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, 7.

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